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MISSISSIPPI PIONEERS

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MISSISSIPPI PIONEERS

by

Henry W. Gray, M. D.
Retired

FOREWORD

My purpose in arranging the memories, legends and traditions of the last tragic years of the Confederacy is to pay tribute to the memory of my great grandfather, Henry Gray.

He was born 1818 in the Gray home on the East bank of the Chickasawhay River, in Township 9, Range 7, Wayne County, Mississippi.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With grateful appreciation I acknowledge with thanks the help and encouragement in writing these bits of family history to my sisters and brothers:

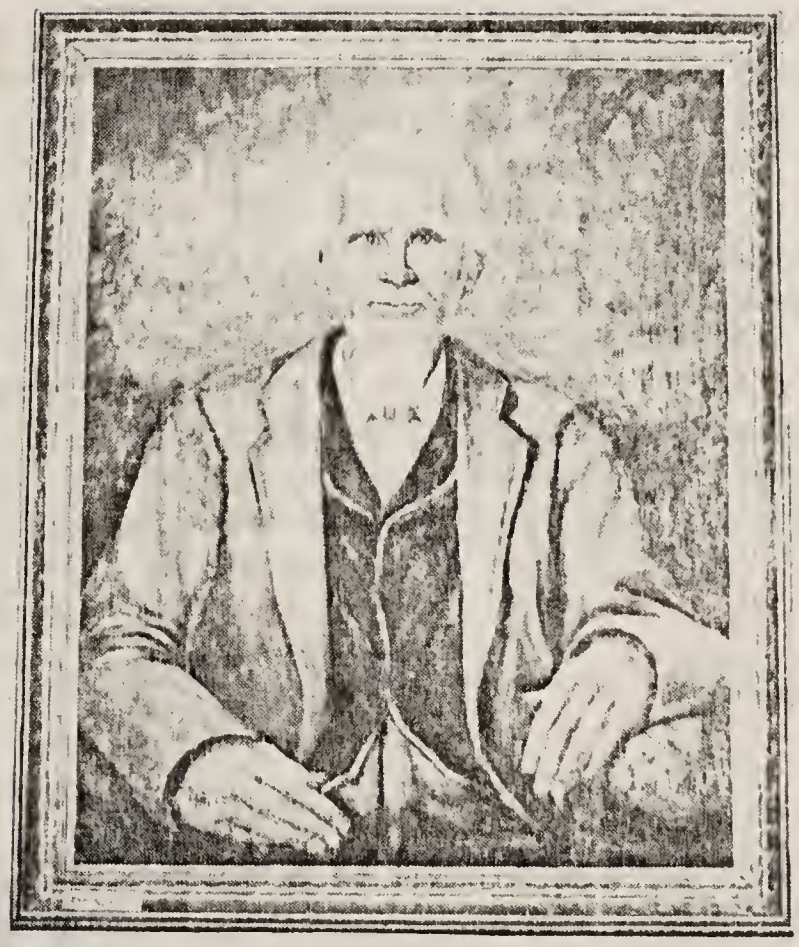
Sallie Gillis
Alice West
Mamie Russell and
her husband, Clyde
Clinch Gray, Jr.
Bessie Dearman
Berta Huggins
Dr. Abner H. Gray
and my son, Eugene Gray

INTRODUCTION

Pioneering of the Gray family through Tennessee to Mississippi, their trail began in North Carolina, wound through Tennessee, settling on the banks of the Chickasawhay River, in the Territory of Mississippi, where they settled permanently in 1810.

LINE ILLUSTRATIONS
by
Arthur Fowler,
Mobile, Ala.

Published by
Southern News Bureau
Mobile, Ala.
1962



GRANDFATHER
HENRY GRAY

CLINCH GRAY

BORN IN NORTH CAROLINA, FEBRUARY 21, 1775

Clinch Gray, my grandfather, emigrated to Tennessee and later to Mississippi.

He was a well educated man, and was appointed by the U. S. Government to survey Wayne County, Mississippi.

At some time during his early years in Tennessee, he met a young man named Fann, and a Damon-Pithian bond of friendship developed which lasted through their busy lifetime.

The U. S. Government appointed Clinch Gray to survey Wayne County in 1811, and to survey the row of Townships Number 5 which crossed Greene County just South of the Wayne County line.

He was also named to survey the Choctaw Indian Reservation, Township 10, Range 7, Wayne County.

It appears that his friend Fann had been a constant companion all through the history making efforts required by the Government.

During these busy years Surveyor Gray had been obtaining and developing a tract of land that lay along the East bank of the Chickasawhay River in Wayne County.

The U. S. Government Land Office was located at (old) Augusta, Mississippi, where Mister Gray was fast becoming a very important man in affairs of the Territory, and was also doing some farming on his own land.

In 1810 he was ready to bring a bride to his growing plantation.

When he journeyed to South Carolina to marry Miss Margaret Evans, his staunch friend Fann accompanied him.

Prepared for the return trip to his plantation, they traveled on horseback and brought household requirements on an eleven packsaddle train.

Arriving at a pre-selected spot on the East bank of the Chickasawhay River, he stood near a mulberry tree, looking up and down the river for a short time. Then he said, "This is the place; here we will stop." They lived in tents pitched near the mulberry tree for some time.

Later, a two-room cabin was built a short distance back from the river. At a later date, the friend Fann died and was buried near the mulberry tree that was now to have a history with the settlers.

GRANDFATHER GRAY'S BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

In this cabin my grandfather, Henry Gray, was born on October 8, 1818, and here he grew into manhood.

Many touching stories hang around the life cycle of the old tree's life history, gone now for many years. The old cemetery is rarely ever visited any longer. Our great grandfather, Clinch Gray, by his earnest request, was buried beside his old pal, Fann.

GRANDFATHER HENRY GRAY'S BOYHOOD

In boyhood Grandfather was slender, tall for his age and had blue eyes that would crinkle with pleasure when listening to a good story or when meeting a friend, but would turn ice-cold if extremely displeased. He had black hair, was very athletic, and was frequently found roaming the deep, wild woods making a careful study of nature by daylight, and of the stars by night.

In these years he began to learn the Indian mind and ways which, in later years, proved to be of great value to him. At an early age he was orphaned by the death of his father and from this time he began to assume an important role in management of his mother's plantation.

His father was often away from home doing surveying work, making visits to Tennessee, Mississippi, the capitol, and various markets.

He early developed strong friendships with the prominent men of the time and began to develop his own leadership ability that equipped him for the strenuous years of his consecrated life of citizen, plantation owner, public official, statesman and slave owner.

His education was limited to early home help and a short time in a school in North Mississippi.

Most certainly he was a self made man, not a highly educated man, but a deep student.

Grandfather Gray was affectionately called "Harry" or "Hal" by his relatives and friends.

His mind was clear and active until the latter years of his life. He was 87 years old at his death.

We children loved and respected him, for he was always interested in our little lives.

Grandpa Gray was twelve years old when his father died.

LOST IN THE WOODS

Several times Grandpa Gray told me the story of getting lost in the forest North of home, towards the Indian village of Huwannes, when a lad of 13 years old.

His story was that he was hunting for cattle one morning, but suddenly realized he was lost in the dense woods. He tried looking at the sun shadows to go southward towards home. After walking a short distance, he saw an Indian tepee and realized he was on a familiar trail.

Calling to an old Indian named Mike whom he knew, he said he had become lost but could now find his way home.

Old Mike looked at him and called to his squaw, "Um Gray lost, fix food".

Soon the squaw brought food of "jerked venison", (deer meat cured in the sun) and big hominy, (grains of corn soaked in a solution of wood ash lye), washed and cooked.

After eating, he thanked olf Mike, saying he could easily reach home, but the old Indian replied, "Follow me", and the Indian strode down the trail, not speaking a word until they reached the Gray home, then said, "You home now", and turned back, returning to his squaw.

THE TURKEY DRIVE AND THE BELLED GOBBLER

Grandpa Gray drove a flock of one hundred turkeys 92 miles from his home to Mobile, Alabama. When in a reminiscent mood he would tell us stories of his early years. One of the most interesting to all of us was his account of driving a flock of one hundred head of turkeys to Mobile, Alabama, when he was 13 years old. These trips were made in the late Fall Season. He would tell us of preparations made for these trips and of getting the flock bunched and started on the road. They would have a wagon to carry food for the turkeys, the team, and the men who assisted him. When everything was ready, the turkeys were carefully counted, one large gobbler was selected, a bell tied around his neck, and this was the "Belled Gobbler". Grandpa, with a bag of feed slung over his shoulder, began to toss grains of food to attact the turkeys. He would begin walking down the road, and the drive was under way to Mobile, Alabama, 92 miles distant, requiring five or six days to make the trip.

Grandpa told us he had made three trips with droves of turkeys, beginning when he was 13 years old. This is not very clear in my mind, but he said he collected $1.00 per head for his fowls. Grandpa said that within a short time the fowls would become accustomed to the movement of the flock and of the gobbler's bell and would flow along the highway like a stream down its bed. It is a well-known fact that when the evening shades start falling, a turkey is going to "Fly Up" in a tree or on some object and cannot be stopped unless it is in a pen. It is natural for them to roost high up in trees, and they would have to stop for the night.

There were pen accommodations along the highway at needed intervals for caring for the flock at night. Arriving in Mobile they would, during the day, drive along the streets and accommodate buyers. A long fishing pole with a wire hook on one end was sued to snare the bird selected.

GRANDFATHER GRAY'S NIGHT RIDE TO FORT WINCHESTER TO BRING A DOCTOR TO HIS MOTHER

Grandpa tole me of the story of his night trip to Winchester to get the doctor for his ill mother. He said she became ill in the early hours of the night and since there was no other person to make the trip, the duty fell on him. At this time he was eight years old and was accustomed to traveling all roads in that part of the country and being out in the forest any hour of the night.

He mounted his horse and rode out to the Old Trading Road and turned South toward Fort Winchester, Mississippi. When he had gone several miles on his way, he saw what appeared to be a man in a white shirt standing on the right-hand side of the road and it appeared so real that he was "scared" and reined his horse to look more closely at the object for moments and it yet looked like a man. Since there was no way to leave the road and surround the object, he looked steadily at it for a few moments and since he saw no way to by-pass it, he gathered courage and rode boldly by it and saw a large white scar face on a pine tree.

He continued his trip uninterrupted to the Fort, found the doctor, and they were quickly on the road to his home. His mother, my Great Grandmother Gray, lived for many years after this memorable experience.

GRANDFATHER HENRY GRAY'S YOUNG MANHOOD

The urgency of the times placed unusual responsibility on Grandpa's young shoulders and educational facilities were very limited, amounting to a short term at school in Lauderdale, Mississippi. He applied himself to the most important subjects at his home. He was elected Sheriff of Wayne County, Mississippi, when he was 18 years of age, but had to wait until his 22nd birthday before assuming the duties of the Sheriff's office. Very early he became deeply involved in the political questions of that hour; local, state, and national, and got to know many prominent men of that time. Grandpa was a fine horseman, sat erect in the saddle, Indian style, and he knew and loved horses. He knew how to make long journeys with safety for his mounts, often riding to Mobile, Alabama; New Orleans; Louisiana; Jackson, Mississippi, or to any place where interest required his personal attention. He was sheriff, tax collector and surveyor for a number of years and was Representative for Wayne County, Mississippi when the war ended. Grandfather would often tell of trips to the big cities and the sights that he well remembered; those about the Mississippi Governor, Clark, left us with stirring memories.

THE CHOCTAW RESERVATION AND HIWANEE, THE INDIAN TOWN

This story will be about my great grandfather, Clinch Gray, and the Choctaw Indian Reservation in Wayne County, Mississippi, and was told to me by my grandfather, Henry Grav, and my father, Clinch M. Gray, who heard the story discussed by elderly men of that period. The legend was practically identical in accounts given by each, in that an agreement had been made between the Choctaw tribe and the United States Government that a survey would be made, the line extending from a point on the Saint Stevens meridian to some point in Mississippi, and that this line would, according to the Choctaw's idea, run South of their Reservation and town, Hiwanee. But when the Government surveying party, under my great grandfather, Clinch Gray, reached a point near to the Range line 7 West, old chief Hiwanee and his braves, who were watching the surveyors, were sure that the line would go North of their land and Town (R7 and T10). Therefore, they confronted the Government party, declaring, "No further", remaining adamant to their continuing the survey as was projected.

In this predicament, surveyor Gray had an inspiring thought. Since it would require weeks of time to make a report to Washington and get instructions by horse back, he proposed to the Indians this plan: Detour around the Reservation, to which they agreed, appearing satisfied. This was the surveyor's plan: Turn South for six miles, after which leave a marker, in a hole dug in the ground, and go West for six miles, leave a hole dug in the ground with marker, turn North until reaching the interrupted line and complete the survey. The surveyor forwarded to Washington complete maps and explanations of the episode which were accepted and made part of permanent Government records.

I will add that the detouring lines of this survey gave lasting headaches to Grandfather Henry Gray and other surveyors because of the strips of land between the detouring line and the Wayne County survey lines.

GRANDFATHER HENRY GRAY'S COURTING TRIPS AND MARRIAGE

The stories relating to Grandpa's early manhood have filtered down through the years. During the periods when he was Wayne County's Sheriff, Tax Collector, Surveyor, and Legislator, it was necessary that he make frequent horse back trips to the Capitol at Jackson, Mississippi, and that he would occasionally spend a night on the trip at the home of his good friend, Judge Harrelson, in Neshoba County, Mississippi.

This is how he met Judge Abner Harrelson's beautiful young daughter, Miss Mary (Dollie) Harrelson. She was petitely figured, had black hair, hazel eyes, a winsome smile and especially infectious laugh. She was an expert horsewoman and mounted on her side-saddle would range over the wild woods fearlessly.

Grandpa married "Dollie" in 1847 and they occupied the Doherty cabin, which Grandpa had previously purchased, until he could build his plantation home on the ridge near the highway.

THE "BIG HOUSE"

The home of Grandfather Henry Gray was the "Big House". It was built of huge logs slabbed on two sides to a six-inch thickness and as wide as the diameter of the pine tree.

The house was constructed of two large rooms with a hall between and a gallery on each side. Part of the East gallery was used as a dining room. The South part of the West gallery was a bed-room for company and visitors.

On the outside of the limestone chimney was carved the numbers 1845 and I've heard members of my family say Mister Irvin Plummer cut them with a pocket knife when the house was built. The old house is yet in good repair is occupied by members of the Gray family since March, 1902.

HOME LIFE OF GRANDPA HENRY GRAY'S SLAVES AND THE ANCIENT SMOKE HOUSE

Grandpa Gray's slave family began with several couples from his mother's estate and by occasional purchases at the slave market in Mobile, Alabama. One splendid figure of a man, Yellow Tom, was part of Grandma Gray's dowery.

After they moved into the new home, the "Big House", on the ridge near the highway, comfortable one-room cabins with stick and "Mud" chimneys were built, each with a wide fireplace and deep hearth for cooking food for the family. The chimneys were always in the West end of the cabin, which was constructed of logs, ceiled with boards between the logs on the inside. Spaces outside were daubed with clay mortar to insure comfort and protection for the family.

The slaves were rationed from the Smoke House, which was constructed of huge slabbed logs and ceiled tightly on the outside. It had two troughs hewn from trunks of massive trees, one on either side of the room for packing the salt meat. Also, three hogs-heads were set three-fourths their length in the earthern floor for safe keeping the lard for cooking.

This famous and deeply weathered antebellum smoke house stood twenty paces from the old Kitchen, which was removed many years ago. Within my memory, three large mulberry trees grew North from the smoke house giving shade in Summer and rang with the chatter of feeding songsters as they feasted on the luscious berries.

THE DUTIES OF SLAVES ON GRANDPA'S PLANTATION

Men slaves worked in the fields, built fences, cleared land to increase the tillable acreage, made expert blacksmiths, carpenters, shoemakers, and trusted teamsters. The women rendered help in cultivating the fields, were excellent cooks, made clothing, cared for children, and were most excellent housekeepers. Usually there was in the "quarters" a competent midwife and nurse who was dependable and sympathetic. Cloth for the slaves' clothing was woven on the big loom that stood on the back porch of the "Big House".

The ox wagon drivers made frequent trips to various towns and cities and were fully competent and trusted.

These people had shrewd minds and easily acquainted themselves with their places in the homes. Servants would hear many secrets while doing their special task, political and social from the quarters, and scandal from the Big House when the candles sputtered low and the glasses were drained.

It has been said that if it were possible to filter a mixture of the small talk of the drawing room and the news items and secrets told by the slaves as they loitered in front of the kitchen fire long after supper, many problems might be solved for us today.

THE BIG BLIZZARD

Grandpa Gray's family of slaves began with several couples from his mother's estate and by occasional purchases at the slave marked in Mobile, Alabama.

Big Yellow Tom, one of grandma's dowry, was a loyal, fearless person, always dependable.

During slavery days, it was customary for plantation owners to equip wagon trains for trips to the markets.

On one of these trips, Grandpa was in charge of a four-wagon train making a trip to New Orleans. After business matters were completed, the train started a trip back home. When the train was safely homeward bound, Grandpa left his driver, Yellow Tom, in charge of the train. Grandpa then rode ahead to his home, arriving late in the evening, feeling that everything was secure.

However, a sudden change in the weather, with winds and ice-cold rains reached blizzard intensity before nightfall. Feeling that those boys on the wagons would freeze to death, he called Mr. Plummer, his plantation foreman, instructing him to prepare a wagon with four relief drivers; saddle two fast horses and take a man with him with blankets and whiskey and find those freezing boys.

Mr. Plummer found the huddled half-frozen drivers about five miles beyond old Augusta, Mississippi. After the boys were bundled up, given sufficient draughts of whiskey, and bedded down in the wagon that brought relief drivers, Yellow Tom and the other three drivers delivered each man to his own quarters at the plantations.

Yellow Tom was placed in a room at the Big House and nursed for six weeks from exposure and pneumonia before he was able to return to his cabin.

I have heard elderly folks say that many trees were killed in the forest by the great blizzard, particularly the young chestnut trees.

Grandpa's mill house for grinding corn meal was constructed from dead tree trunks, killed by the blizzard.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OF THE SLAVES

THE FIFE

The fife was a long section of reed with a hole in one end, six holes in the other half end. The player blew in the single hole and with his fingers moving over the other holes could make the correct notes for the music he wished to produce.

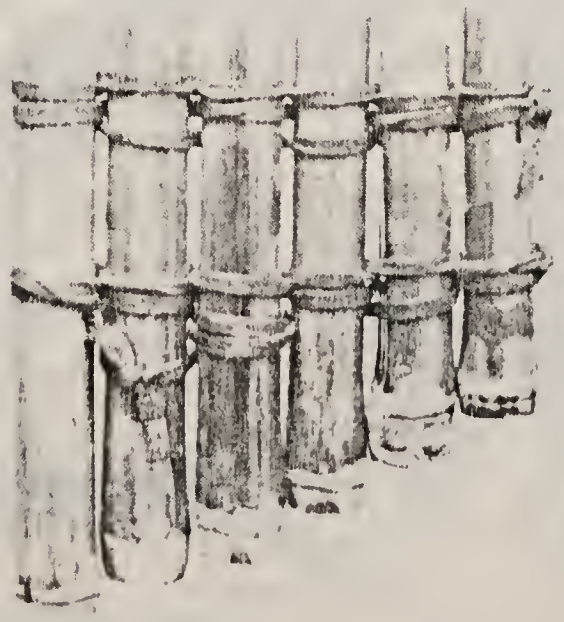
In the century ago slaves would have rip-roaring frolics at nearby plantations, singing and dancing to the music they could produce, augmented often by clapping of hands, stamping of

feet and thumping on the bottom of a tin pan while others kept a watchful eye for the dreaded "Patty Roller".

THE PANQUILLS

It was several years ago that I first read the story of the panquills and the fife. Recently I have read in several magazines histories of the panpipe and other musical instruments used by ancient peoples in many lands.

In Peru the panquill habit was a serious industry and pleasure. These Indians were intensely concerned about a set series of notes in one particular scale. It appears that there were many complicated ways of producing music.



From memory I can describe the panquill. It was composed of six sections of tubes of different lengths, cut to produce the different notes when held side by side and blown over the ends. In the late evening hours, the music was weird, shrill, and throbbing, and I recall that the young troubadours occasionally had two sets of quills and that they would engage in arguments about them, but of this I could not understand anything.

I recall that on one late afternoon two of my young colored friends were each blowing a panquill and that they used the words, "Papa" and "Mama", terms that meant nothing to me. Recently I read in a Journal that these terms were in use centuries ago.

NIGHT RAMBLES OF YOUNG BLOODS IN SLAVERY DAYS

When a young buck would steal away from his quarters cabin in the night hours to visit a dusky damsel at a nearby plantation, he most likely dallied the hours away and must run fast to reach his cabin before the dawn.

They all firmly believed in "sperits", ghosts, signs and omens, and the belated troubadour listened to every sound, quickening his pace to reach his home ground before daylight would find him on the trail.

One short ditty of warning I've heard the old-times chant about belated royesters was this:

"Run boy, run,
It's almost day,
Run boy, run,
'De patty-rollers ketch you,
Run boy, run,
It's almost day,
Run boy, run".

GRANDPA GRAY'S SONS ATTEND ACADEMY AT PIERCES SPRINGS, ALABAMA

This famous, exclusive institution was established especially to qualify the sons of plantation owners for assuming their anticipated sphere in the glorious Southland as plantation owners, statesmen and true Southern men.

Dr. Mellard was an able instructor at the academy and left his impression on the students who studied under him.

Leaving Jackson, Mississippi, after the Yankee officer had closed the capitol building and Governor Clark's meeting with the Legislators at the Executive Mansion informally closed the session with the earnest plea that each of them return to their homes and begin to rebuild the South, Grandpa Gray began quickly to form plans for the future.

His four sons had recently been called home from the academy. Their names in age order are: Clinch M. Gray, (my father), John L. Gray, William G. Gray, Thomas J. Gray. Aunt Sallie was the youngest in the family.

GOVERNOR CLARKE CALLS LEGISLATURE

JACKSON

Grandpa related to us many times the story of his last trip to answer the Governor's call for the Legislature to meet in Jackson, Mississippi. Grandpa Gray was a member of the Legislature. He said that on this day (I got the thought that it was the last time that the Legislators would ever meet) the members were walking aimlessly around the Capitol, standing in groups or stopping to discuss the impending collapse of the Confederacy. Later in the afternoon a page touched each member on the shoulder and said, "The Governor requests your presence at the Executive Mansion at early candle light". The Legislators were waiting in a room of the mansion for the Governor, who, in a short time appeared and addressed the group, enumerating the several phases of the impending tragic collapse of the Confederacy, and finished with saying, "Lee will surrender and the South is lost. I beg each of you to make your way back to your homes as best you can and begin to rebuild the South".

Leaving Jackson, Mississippi, Grandpa said that he made the way to Meridian, Mississippi, then quickly to the Chickasawhay River where he procured a boat and rowed downstream to the old Clinch Gray home and from there he hurried out to his plantation home. Grandpa mentioned the incident of the Yankee officers taking charge of the Capitol building and ordering the Governor to stop hitching his

saddle horse in front of the Capitol. But the Governor's horse was hitched at the identical post the following morning. He said that the Governor, a one-armed man, was perfectly fearless, and was not daunted at the Yankee officer's orders.

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY
P. O. BOX 571
JACKSON 5, MISSISSIPPI

CHARLOTTE CAPERS
DIRECTOR

Great grandfather Clinch Gray and General James Patton were members of the Constitutional Convention that made Mississippi a state from the Territory. Their names are on the monument in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Clinch Gray, the father of Hon. Henry Gray, was a son of Thomas Gray, of East Tennessee, a lawyer and minister there for sixty-four years, and was born in North Carolina in 1775, and emigrated to Tennessee, and later to Wayne county, Miss. His education was good, and he was appointed to the position of surveyor by the United States government, and surveyed township five across the entire state. This township includes the northern part of Greene county. He made some crops during the time, however. He was married in 1810 to Miss Margaret Evans, of South Carolina, a daughter of John Evans, a successful planter. They had six children: Thomas, Mary, John, Henry, Chelly, and Clinch. Of these Henry and John survive. The father died in 1822, his widow in 1858 or 1859, having been for many years a Baptist. Henry Gray, the subject of this notice, was born October 8, 1818 in Wayne county, Miss. His advantages for education were limited. He began life on his own account at the age of twenty-four years, and during the year in which he reached that age he was elected sheriff of Wayne county. Before that time, however, he had attended two sittings of the court at Winchester, then the county seat of Wayne. It is very likely that Mr. Gray is the only man ever elected to so responsible an office at so youthful an age. He filled the position for six years, and then returned to his farm. In 1850 he was connected with the taking of the national census. In 1864 and 1865 he was a member of the Mississippi legislature. Mr. Gray was married in 1847 to Miss Mary Haraldson, a daughter of Abner Haraldson, a planter of Newton county, Miss., who bore him five children: C. M. Gray, John L. Gray, W. G. Gray, T. J. Gray, and Sallie Gray. C. M. Gray married Miss Melissa DuBose; John L. Gray married Miss Mary Dougherty; William G. Gray married Miss Annie DuBose. All are residents of Wayne county, Miss. Mr. Gray has been a Mason. Politically he is a democrat. He is a member of the Missionary Baptist church of Waynesboro, of which Mrs. Gray is also a member. Three of these children are Baptists and one is a Methodist. Mr. Gray purchased land in 1846, and by additional purchases now owns more than four hundred acres, though he at one time owned one thousand two hundred acres, a distribution having been made between the children. His chief crops are corn and cotton. On the arrival of Mr. Gray's parents the country was a wilderness, and the travel was by packhorses, which fact is sufficient to give his family place among the pioneers.

GRANDPA RETURNS FROM JACKSON TO HIS PLANTATION, WAYNE COUNTY

Returning from attendance of the last session of the Mississippi Legislature, he began immediately to make plans to meet the impending collapse of the Confederacy. About ten o'clock on the morning of the 10th of April, 1865, he was sitting on the front porch of his home. The mulberry trees in the back yard were fully budded, the sunlight was making shadows through the great oak trees in the front yard, and the birds were flitting and darting among their branches.

He sat pondering in deep thought, gazing with unfocused vision down the wide lane toward the highway. A hundred paces from where he sat stood the great hand-hewn log granary in which was stored food and provisions for the entire plantation. To the left of the lane stood the ghostlike arms of the now unused cotton press, and nearby were the stables for his horses, and further to the left was his prized apple orchard. As he glanced down the lane he saw a moving object; his vision clearing, he recognized it to be a horseman riding fast toward the house, where the rider halted at the front gate and called out, "Mr. Gray, Lee has surrendered; the war is over". After exchanging comments, he wheeled his mount and passed quickly from sight down the lane. Although Grandpa knew full well that he soon must face this tragic situation, yet this message left him bewildered and shocked. The beloved Southland would demand the strength and courage of every citizen; his spirit stirred to the call, knowing that many people would look for aid and advice from him and that he must find the way - a new way of life.

True to his Christian faith, he felt that with God's help we would find that way.

"BLOW THE HORN"

GRANDFATHER GRAY FREES HIS SLAVES

After the horseman had vanished out of the lane, Grandpa sat in silence, seeming scarcely to breathe for several minutes. His entire world must be reorganized; what plans could be made for the immediate future?

Turning suddenly, he spoke to the slave girl standing in the hall behind him. This chanced to be the last command he would ever give to one of his slaves, when he called to her, "BLOW THE HORN".

The sharp staccato blasts rolled over the valley. Within moments they reached the ears of every person on the plantation. Each person knew to rush to the "Big House" (the master's mansion), for that signal meant an emergency; the horn blown in this manner (rapidly repeated sharp blasts) meant either fire, serious illness, or death.

At the sound of the horn the overseers and the laborers instantly rushed to the "Big House" and in a short time all slaves were arriving and standing in groups in front of the yard gate waiting to know the cause of the signal. The old men, the women and children, in little groups, were murmuring to each other. To many, born here, freedom was a word to be feared; to others it envisioned a life of freedom, not thinking of what it would mean to earn their own living. The entire group of slaves stood quietly awaiting some gestures from Old Marster, who was on the porch.

Grandfather, after a short interval, roused himself and looked out toward the waiting slaves, then said to the overseer, Mister Irvin Plummer, "Call all of them in to the yard". They stood waiting,

looking toward Old Marster and, after a short interval, he said, "Boys, Lee has surrendered; you all are free". In moments he added, "This is your home as long as you wish to stay here".

It is a fact of history that many families remained in their cabins for several years. Others built cabins on available land, or secured lodging elsewhere.

HAS FREED HIS SLAVES

PLANS TO MEET OBLIGATIONS

Grandpa began quickly to establish some form of order at his home and plantation. His next thought was the satisfying of his creditors, especially the four commission merchants who supplied him on a yearly basis, when the cotton crop was harvested, baled and hauled by wagons to the Alabama River from where it was shipped by river-boat to Mobile and settlement was made with the planters.

Waiting for a short time to perfect arrangements for controlling the affairs of the plantation, he thought first of the Mobile merchants. The small hoardings of gold was put in the well worn saddle bags and his horse saddled. Giving final words of counsel to "Dollie", he mounted and again took the road to Mobile, arriving after a two-day journey.

Stopping at the old Battle House, the first move was to contact the merchants who quickly had their representatives meet him in his room. When they arrived and had some greetings and comments, Grandpa emtied the pouch of gold coins on a table and divided the pile into four parts as nearly equal as he could; then he said "Gentlemen, this is the last and is all that I have." This well authenticated story is that a spokesman for the merchants said, "Mister Gray, take your money back home and begin to rebuild the South." But Grandpa did not accept this generous offer, left the money with them, contacted the Mobile and Ohio Railroad Company for surveying work and departed for home to retrieve his compass and jacob staff and begin his familiar trade of surveying, which he continued for several years. He did work for the old Mobile and Ohio Railroad, first was the Mobile, Jackson and Kansas City Railroad, in Alabama and Mississippi. Several years later he obtained possession of a parcel of land and cabin near the river property and moved his family into this cabin, known as the "Bishop House", until a home could be built on his river land.

Grandpa's age was 47 and he must now put forth every effort to meet the troubled times that would come to the prostrated Southland.

General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House in Virginia, on the 9th day of April, 1865.

THE INSTANCE OF PASSING OF SLAVERY IN THE SOUTH AND THE AFTERMATH

Grandfather Gray, sitting in his chair on the front gallery of the Gray home, looked over the group of slaves standing in front of him and gave the verdict of fate with its shattering cleavage of the entire economy of the South. This was an instance rarely occurring in world history when he spoke saying, "Boys, you are free."

The passing of slavery with this short sentence changed life for all time for these people; their manner of life, obtaining food, living accommodations, and the desire to develop some social fabric that would hold together the bewildered folk. They quickly found work on the farm at the pay the struggling owners could then afford. Many got work as section hands on railroads and sawmills, but usually they secured employment on farms. The women readily found work on farms as hoe hands and harvesters and as nurses and housekeepers.

The old men, no longer able to do any remunerative jobs, confined their activity to hunting wild game. Old Uncle Pete was a famous hunter in the night hours. He owned three famous "coon dawgs" and when they treed a coon Uncle Pete would climb up the tree and make the coon jump - the dogs were waiting and they had many great fights before the coon lost the battle.

Another likeable old character was Wes Rankin who hunted only in the day time. We owned an ancient one barrel fowling piece that had lost the hammer to explode the cap, but when he had spotted a squirrel and got the bead on it, he met this small problem by holding his pocket knife in the right hand and tapping the cap. He assured me that he rarely missed having meat for his supper.

My father carried me with him to Uncle Wes' funeral. The Reverend Johnson Jordon conducted the services and said that Brother Rankin assured him that his way was as "clear as a 'Spring Branch'".

THE OLD NURSE MAMMIES OF SLAVERY DAYS

Taking a backward glance along the trail of the past one hundred years, I know there was in the hearts of a great many of the old colored people a deep feeling of affection and reverence for their old marsters. I can recall many instances of assistance and devotion of these freed

folks. In times of sickness, sorrow and death, they would prepare the graves and render aid and sympathy in every way possible when a death occurred in our families.

I retain many memories of the old nursing mammies of the past century, for several of them frequently visited our home in my early years, and one aged nurse would hold me in her arms and run her gnarled fingers through my long yellow curls and with a far off dreamy look in her eyes murmur repeatedly in an undertone, "Little marster - little marster."

In after years I can understand that she was nostalgically remembering the long ago in the "Big House" with all its pomp and glory of the long away days when she nursed other little marsters who laughed and gurgled in their cribs and grew into womanhood and manhood. None have ever been more faithful and devoted than these quaint old mammies whose head covering was usually a bandana kerchief coiled over her head and tied behind the neck, and she usually had a twig tooth brush attached over an ear.

Grandfather Gray attended the funeral of his old slaves as long as he was able to ride his horse.

They will live long in our memories.

REMEDIES OF THE CIVIL WAR PERIOD

USED GENERALLY BY BOTH RACES

1. A popular treatment for swollen and painful areas was the plaster or mustard blister made with water and finely powdered mustard and applied to painful areas.

2. A poultice made with corn meal and water applied hot was a popular remedy applied snugly to the area in distress.

3. An ointment made with snuff and lard was a sovereign remedy for itch, which was a wide spread affliction of children as well as adults.

4. "Boneset", a weed growing profusely in damp areas and along fence rows, whose yellow leaves made into a tea was the remedy of choice for the colored people for all joint and muscle pain. Applied to seat of pain.

5. The common Jimson weed to make poultices for ulcers was a very popular remedy in rural section.

6. The red berries of the sumac herb bush cooked and seeds removed was a valued remedy for dermatitis, applied poultice.

7. A strong tea made from the root of the common blackberry vine was a common remedy for dermatitis, and good.

8. The inner bark of the "Slippery Elm" tree, cut into strips, steeped in water, was a first choice remedy for ulcerated mouth and throat, used as wash and gargle.

9. Mullen leaves soaked in vinegar was a popular local remedy for sprains and bruises.

10. The outer covering of the common Dogwood made into a liquid draught was a substitute for quinine with both white and colored residents.

11. Grandfather "Graybeard" tea made from the bark was a time old choice as a blood purifier. The bark was cut into strips and mixed with horses feed.

12. For many centuries a solution from the bark of the black haw tree has been a boon to females.

13. For ages, the willow tree, the twigs and leaves steeped in hot water, was given as a tonic. It was a popular treatment for malaria.

14. The juice of the green covering of an English walnut was commonly used to treat warts.

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THE "BOARD TREE" TRADITION FOR EMIGRANTS

Coming down to us from the earliest days was the tradition of the "Board Tree". In my earliest years, I remember the unwritten emigrants' law concerning the right of an emigrant to cut a "Board Tree" on any adjoining property to obtain boards to cover the cabin in which he would live as a home.

I have heard discussed many times the right of emigrants to a tree, and the general opinion was that this legend is correct. A few times in my younger years, I have heard that landowners often would mark suitable trees to make the boards to cover the log cabins.

This tradition, I have learned from emigrants and veterans of these early times, was that many land owners would mark trees that would make "rive" boards to cover the cabin in which the emigrant was to make his home.

GRANDFATHER GRAY'S PLANTATION NEIGHBORS

The nearby plantation owners were close friends of Grandpa Gray. I have heard many discussions in which each of his neighbors would be favorably mentioned. They often visited Grandpa to discuss social, political and industrial questions.

The Faulkner plantation was nearest to the Gray's and adjoined his river land. They were friendly neighbors.

The Horns were rich prairie planters. They owned a large number of slaves and were great cotton growers.

The Langs were the Gray family's best friends, I think. They came to Great Grandma's relief when she was in financial distress and real estate trouble. They always spoke of him with deference.

The Norsworthy holdings were three miles North on the old stage road which lay along the ridge in front of Grandpa's home.

The Chapman homes, three in number, were two miles South and they were good neighbors.

The Dohertys, two brothers, owned several parcels of land two miles Northeast of the Grays, and owned a number of slaves.

The Pou and Harbin families were located several miles East on Dry Creek and were long time friends and political allies. They owned a number of physically able slaves.

Grandpa Gray's brother, "Major" John J. Gray, who was oldest, lived three miles South on the old stage road.

Several families of the Gandy name lived in the edge of the prairie and on Dry Creek. They were prosperous farmers and owned good farms.

THE OLD GRAY CEMETERY

WAYNE COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

The first burial here was for Mister Fann, Great Grandfather Gray's dear friend. Great Grandfather Gray requested at his death that he be buried by his friend Fann's side.

In my early boyhood I, with my father, attended a funeral of a member of the Gray family at this old cemetery. My Grandfather pointed to a rotting piece of wood in the earth and explained to me that this was the last of the old mulberry tree.

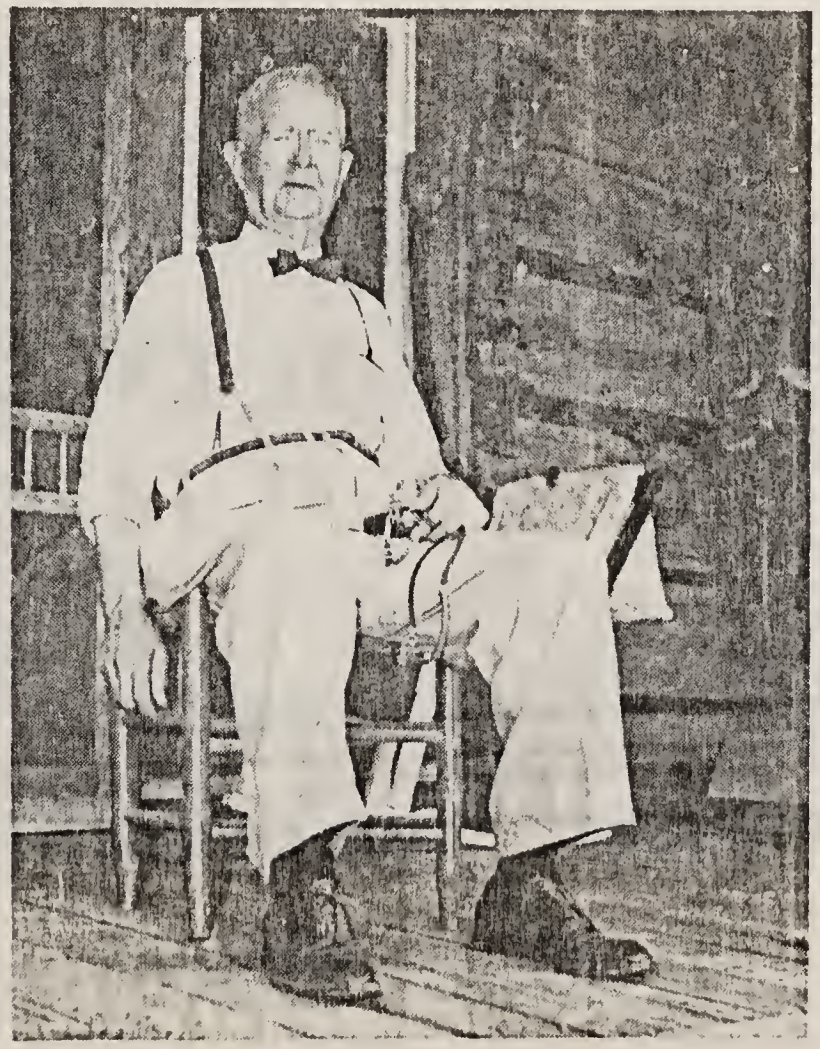
I MADE A VISIT TO THE OLD HENRY GRAY HOME

OF SLAVERY DAYS

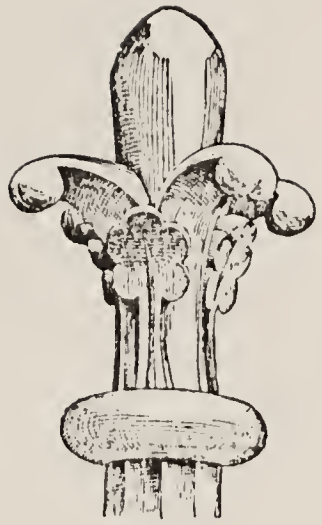
In August, 1960, I re-visited this historic home built in the early 1840s by slave labor and the old building is in a remarkable state of preservation.

It was my good fortune to have a good friend, Robert O. Rubel, Jr., accompany me on this trip, for he is a photography fan and made several good pictures of the well preserved old house and its present owners, Mr. and Mrs. James D. Gray. He made shots of several antiques and one of your scribe, Doctor H. W. Gray, sitting in the chair where my grandfather sat when he declared freedom to his slaves.

On our return trip we detoured to pass the old river land home where Grandpa spent the remaining years of his aging life, reliving memories of a strenuously spent, though well spent life.



After a short visit with my sister, Mrs. C. H. Russell, in Waynesboro, Mississippi, we turned toward Mobile, Alabama, our starting point. This was a most interesting trip and stirred up the ghosts of a train of quiescent memories.



PICKING COTTON

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